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ABSTRACT

The Teachers Centre for Continuing Education was established to provide opportunities for teachers to undertake further study in order to upgrade their professional qualifications. The Western Australia Post Secondary Education Commission, acting on the Partridge Report on Post-Secondary Education in Western Australia, investigated recommendations that the Centre be phased out. It was suggested that a multi-campus education institution offer part-time and external courses for inservice study. Reasons for this change include: (1) declining Centre enrollment; (2) decreased need for the Centre, which was originally established when opportunity for inservice study was limited; (3) ability of existing education institutions to offer more appropriate courses; and (4) limited geographic applicability of Centre courses. The Commission recommends that the Teachers Centre for Continuing Education be phased out over a three year period. This phasing out must be well publicized. No new students are to be permitted to enroll, and all possible steps to ensure that the rights and interests of Centre staff members are preserved are to be taken. (CJ)

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Western Australian Post-Secondary Education Commission

1977

REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF THE TEACHERS CENTRE FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN POST SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Teachers Centre for Continuing Education was established to provide opportunities for teachers to undertake further study in order to upgrade their professional qualifications. The question of the Centre's future is before the Commission since the Partridge Report on Post-Secondary Education in Western Australia recommended that the Centre should be phased out and that the W.A. College of Advanced Education (a proposed multi-campus institution consisting of the constituent colleges of the W.A. Teacher Education Authority), when it is formally established, should develop part-time and external courses of study for teachers designed to enable them to upgrade their professional qualifications.

PROCEDURES

2. The Commission established a Sub-committee to make initial enquiries into this matter. The Sub-committee circulated a statement of issues and invited submissions from interested parties. A number of submissions were received and, in addition, discussions were held with representatives of a number of organisations. The names of organisations and individuals who made submissions, and of deputations that were interviewed, are listed in Appendix 1.

3. The Sub-committee reported to the Commission in June and this report has been discussed fully and is supported by the Commission.

BACKGROUND

4. The period of initial training for teachers has increased significantly in Western Australia over the last forty years. A one-year period of training became the normal programme for student teachers in 1938 and a two-year period of training became normal in 1945. Three-year training was introduced in the teachers colleges in 1968. Prior to 1968 the only teachers to have more than two years' training were University graduates or those who undertook specialist courses. However, most primary teachers and a significant proportion of secondary teachers were not University graduates but graduates of the State's teachers colleges and possessed only the Teachers' Certificate.

5. As the Partridge Committee noted, the promotional and salary structures of the Education Department provide a strong incentive for teachers to gain additional post-experience qualifications. The salary schedule

classifies teachers into two groups of two-year and three-year trained teachers, and four-year and five-year trained. Teachers in the second group receive a salary considerably in excess of that paid to the first group. Teachers wishing to progress towards the principalship of a larger primary or a secondary school must also gain the Teachers' Higher Certificate, either by following a course of study provided by the Teachers Centre for Continuing Education or by possessing other acceptable qualifications and the equivalent of a full year's study in education.

6. The Teachers Centre has, over the years, provided part-time (afternoon and evening) and external conversion courses leading to the Teachers' Certificate and the Teachers' Higher Certificate. The Teachers' Certificate courses have provided initial training for limited numbers of conditionally certificated teachers, teachers in non-government schools and selected mature age recruits. The Teachers' Higher Certificate Courses have enabled teachers including those who have previously graduated from colleges with less than the current minimum period of training to improve their qualifications and opportunities for promotion and salary payments.

7. In recent years very few students have qualified for the Teachers' Certificate by undertaking courses at the Teachers Centre. However, the Centre has enrolled significant numbers of candidates for courses leading to the Teachers' Higher Certificate.

8. To qualify for the Teachers' Higher Certificate, which is issued by the State's Education Department, teachers must complete a specified number of years of satisfactory service and a programme of academic studies known as the "Academic Requirement". The "Academic Requirement", which consists of an "Education Requirement" and a "Special Subject Area Requirement" may be completed by undertaking studies at a number of institutions including the Centre. Some statistical information relating to the Centre is contained in Appendix 2. Table 1. shows the number of candidates enrolled at the Centre for the "Education Requirement" of the Teachers' Higher Certificate for the years 1966 to 1977. The "Education Requirement" of the Teachers' Higher Certificate may be satisfied by passing four units or a lesser number of units together with a research project and report or a dissertation. Table 1. also shows unit enrolments for the years 1966 to 1977. Tables 2. and 3. show details of student enrolments at the Centre in 1977.

9. Both the number of candidates enrolled and unit enrolments peaked in 1974 and have been declining since then. The Planning Branch of the Education Department has estimated that the number of candidates enrolled for "Education Requirement" units will fall further to 730 in 1978, 700 in 1979 and 670 in 1980 and that the corresponding unit enrolments will fall to 1100 in 1978, 1050 in 1979 and 1000 in 1980.

10. In December 1976 the full-time staff of the Centre consisted of seven permanent employees of the Education Department who were filling promotional positions, ten permanent employees of the Education Department filling acting positions, and three temporary employees of the Education Department filling acting positions. In addition, there were 24 part-time staff who each gave one two-hour lecture per week.

SOME GENERAL ISSUES

11. The Partridge Committee noted that the Centre has been operating in a time when opportunities for part-time and external study were very limited. The Partridge Committee expressed the view that the Centre had performed an indispensable function in teacher education, and went on to say that it was impressed by the effectiveness of the services rendered by the Centre to teachers throughout the State.

12. However, the Partridge Committee and a number of other bodies have pointed out that in more recent times a much wider range of study alternatives for teachers has been made available through the universities and colleges of advanced education.

13. The University of Western Australia has offered part-time and external courses for many years, although it is now phasing out its commitment to external studies in favour of Murdoch University. Murdoch University and the Western Australian Institute of Technology have entered the teacher education field in recent years and both institutions are actively developing external studies.

14. In addition, the constituent colleges of the Western Australian Teacher Education Authority have, over the last few years, begun to make a significant contribution to the continuing education of teachers. In fact, while there were 4,882 equivalent full-time students in teacher education courses in the teachers colleges in 1977, 800 equivalent full-time students were enrolled in post-experience courses. Since 1975 the colleges have offered conversion courses to enable holders of the Teachers' Certificate to obtain a Diploma of Teaching. The colleges are also diversifying their courses to include post-experience studies at Bachelor

degree and Graduate Diploma levels, each requiring at least one year of full-time study (or the equivalent thereof of part-time study) beyond the Diploma of Teaching.

15. Further, Mount Lawley Teachers College has been designated the external studies outlet for the constituent colleges of the Western Australian Teacher Education Authority and it has been active in developing external studies.

16. The reduction in the levels of intake into pre-service education courses at the teachers colleges has generated a capacity for them to assume a greater role in post-experience teacher education courses without the need for additional resources.

17. As the Partridge Committee pointed out, a serious disadvantage of the present arrangement is that the qualifications gained by study through the Centre are designed solely to meet the requirements of the Education Department of Western Australia, and they have therefore a very restricted recognition. The Partridge Committee also pointed out that it is now very widely accepted by educationists that it is highly desirable that the academic and professional qualifications acquired by teachers should be such that they are accorded recognition by other than their employing authority, and provide teachers with the opportunities to seek employment in other educational systems or other avenues of employment if they so desire.

18. It has been suggested to the Commission that this disadvantage would be overcome if the courses offered by the Centre were submitted for accreditation by the Australian Council on Awards in Advanced Education. The Commission doubts that accreditation would be possible and, in any case, little would be gained by such a course of action if resources sufficient to meet demand for post-experience courses were available in other institutions in the post-secondary education system.

19. It has been argued that throughout the Western world there has been a trend away from the situation where teacher education courses are provided by employing authorities. It has been counter-argued that this trend should be seen as applying to pre-service education only and that there seems to be no valid reason why the opportunity for continuing professional development and the attainment of special qualifications for promotion should not be the responsibility of the employer. Whatever the validity of the two arguments, the employing authority involved in this particular case has declared that it no longer wishes to provide teacher education courses. In addition, the Commission is of the view that economic factors must be taken into account in arriving at a decision regarding the Centre's future. If

other institutions within the post-secondary education system have available resources which could be used to provide appropriate courses for teachers to upgrade their qualifications then the Commission would view with concern any proposal to upgrade the status of the Centre.

20. It has been put to the Commission that the Centre should be retained as it is already functioning smoothly as an effective, operational unit, it provides courses of a high standard and the staff are well qualified and have a sound understanding of the needs of schools and of part-time and external teachers. While this may be so, the Commission is of the view that the same remarks can be made about other post-secondary education institutions which provide post-experience courses for teachers.

21. The Education Department has informed the Commission that it would support the Partridge Committee recommendations regarding the Centre, provided that alternative study opportunities suited to the needs of its teachers are available on a part-time and external basis. In view of the downturn in enrolments in pre-service education courses it is likely that resources will be available within the post-secondary education system as a whole to provide such courses.

22. Accordingly, the Commission has reached the conclusion that the Centre should be phased out. It has been suggested to the Commission that, as alternatives to phasing out, the Centre could be transferred directly under the control of the proposed Western Australian College of Advanced Education or transferred as an entity to one of the constituent colleges of the Western Australian Teacher Education Authority. Neither of these alternatives would seem to be appropriate as they would be very unlikely to result in any rationalization in the provision of resources for teacher training.

THE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS OF STAFF

23. If the Centre is to be phased out, careful consideration must be given to safeguarding the rights and interests of staff. The Education Department has expressed the view that the staff could be readily absorbed within other sections of the Department. However, representatives of the staff have expressed some concern regarding this issue. The Education Department has been giving some thought to the future of the Centre for a number of years and, in order to keep as many options as possible open, has not made any permanent appointments to positions in the Centre over the last four years. While the majority of the members of staff are permanent employees of the Education Department, relatively few are filling substantive positions within the Centre and accordingly their rights are limited.

Members of the staff are concerned that they will be disadvantaged by virtue of the fact that most of them are not filling substantive positions.

24. Representatives of the staff have also expressed concern regarding their interests. They claim that most of the staff have, for some years, been encouraged to concentrate their studies on issues related to the Centre's activities and now feel that they would not readily fit into administrative or teaching positions within the Education Department. It should be pointed out, however, that the Education Department has, in recent years, adopted a policy of not making permanent appointments to the Centre and this policy could hardly be interpreted as encouraging staff to believe that they would continue to occupy positions within the Centre.

25. However, if the Centre is to be phased out all possible steps should be taken to ensure that the rights and interests of members of staff are preserved. It may be that if the Centre is phased out over a number of years some of the members of staff may have an opportunity to find satisfactory positions outside the Education Department. While the phasing out of the Centre is unlikely to create a demand for additional staff at the teachers colleges, it may be that positions will become available over the years and staff of the Centre will have the opportunity to compete in open competition for such positions. Members of staff who do not find positions elsewhere should be placed in suitable positions within the Education Department at levels of salary equivalent to those they receive at present.

THE AVAILABILITY OF ALTERNATIVE COURSES

26. If the Centre is to be phased out it will also be essential to ensure that appropriate courses are available within the post-secondary education system to meet the needs of the Education Department and of teachers for further study. It is understood that the Education Department is satisfied that courses appropriate to its needs are available at other institutions and accordingly supports the notion that the Centre be phased out.

27. Some concern has been expressed, however, as to whether the courses available at other institutions will be as readily available or as appropriate as courses offered by the Centre. The Centre has always followed a policy of accepting all applicants for places and it has been suggested that other institutions might not be in a position to absorb the numbers of students involved. However, the point has also been made that the constituent colleges of the Western Australian Teacher Education Authority could readily absorb the additional students involved as demand for Diploma of Teaching conversion courses declines. If the Centre is

phased out the WA Post Secondary Education Commission will take into account the need for additional places in post-experience courses when it reviews teacher supply and demand and recommends on places for 1978. In this regard the Commission will pay particular attention to the types of programmes and numbers of places available for external students. In the unlikely event that sufficient places are not available the Commission will place a case for additional assistance before the appropriate authorities.

28. The question of the availability of post-experience courses for secondary teachers has been raised with the Commission. It is understood that courses are available on a part-time basis at the two universities, the Western Australian Institute of Technology and the Secondary Teachers College. In addition external courses are available through Murdoch University and the Western Australian Institute of Technology. Further, the Secondary Teachers College makes available a number of summer session post-experience courses which may be supplemented with appropriate external courses offered by Mount Lawley Teachers College.

THE PHASING OUT OF THE CENTRE

29. The Commission recommends that the Centre be phased out over a three year period commencing in 1978. The phasing out period of three years should allow plenty of time for students who have commenced studies at the Centre to complete the "Academic Requirement" of the Teachers Higher Certificate. The Commission also recommends that no new students be permitted to enrol for courses at the Centre. Appropriate alternative courses are available at other institutions and, in any event, the Commission believes that in the interests of staff and student morale the Centre should be phased out as soon as possible. A new intake in 1978 would prolong the phasing out period by a further year. The Commission further recommends that the phasing out of the Centre be widely publicised in order to draw the closure of the Centre to the attention of all students currently enrolled for courses there.

30. Problems will arise for a number of students if the Centre is closed. One such group is teachers whose initial training involved two years of study, or less, and who, by and large, were granted three-year trained status on the basis of long service. Long service has been used as a promotion criteria for these teachers in view of the fact that they have been victims of circumstances in that the initial period of training was increased to three years after they had entered the teaching service. Such teachers can at present attain four-year trained status by undertaking relevant courses at the Centre. However, although the Education Department

recognises them as three-year trained for salary and classification purposes, the teachers colleges require them to undertake bridging courses (to convert their two-year trained qualification to a Diploma of Teaching) before admitting them to fourth year (i.e. Bachelor of Education and graduate diploma) courses. Significant numbers of teachers in this group are at present enrolled in Diploma of Teaching conversion courses at the teachers colleges but limited numbers will probably want to proceed directly to studies for the Teachers' Higher Certificate without having to undertake bridging courses. While the Commission is of the view that the Centre should not be maintained to provide for this group of students it hopes that the various institutions involved in the provision of alternative courses will treat applications for admission and for advanced standing from such students with some degree of sympathy.

31. Some Technical School teachers who are recognised by the Education Department as three-year trained may not be acceptable directly into Bachelor of Education courses at the teachers colleges. These teachers join the Education Department prior to obtaining a teaching qualification and they undertake courses through the Technical Education Division which qualify them for three-year trained status. It is understood, however, that the number of teachers in this group is very small and that the Education Department is discussing with one of the teachers colleges the possibility of such teachers being permitted to enrol directly for a Bachelor of Education course.

32. The Centre still enrols a number of candidates for Teachers' Certificate courses and this group may experience some difficulties if the Centre closes. This small group of students includes conditionally certificated Education Department specialist teachers and holders of incomplete Diplomas of Teaching, and teachers in non-government schools. It is thought that the number of conditionally certificated teachers will decline over the years, particularly in view of the present situation with respect to supply and demand for teachers. In any event, there may well be advantages in the Education Department negotiating with one of the teachers colleges regarding the provision of appropriate courses for limited numbers of unqualified specialist teachers and teachers who have not completed their initial qualification. There is now a wide range of courses for which unqualified teachers in non-government schools can enrol.

SUMMARY

33. The Commission recommends to the Minister -

(a) *that the Teachers' Centre for Continuing Education be phased out over a period of three years commencing in 1978;*

(b) *that the phasing out of the Centre be well publicised;*

(c) *that no new students be permitted to enrol for courses at the Centre;*

(d) *that all possible steps be taken to ensure that the rights and interests of members of the staff of the Centre are preserved.*

34. The Commission assures the Minister that if the Centre is phased out it will take into account the need for additional places in post-experience courses when it reviews teacher supply and demand and recommends on places for 1978 and that in this regard it will pay particular attention to the types of programmes and number of places available for external students.

8 June 1977

APPENDIX 1

SUBMISSIONS AND INTERVIEWS

Organisations and Individuals Who Made Submissions:

1. Academic Staff Association of the Western Australian Teachers Colleges (Inc.)
2. Churchlands Teachers College
3. Education Department
4. Independent Schools Salaried Officers' Association of Western Australia
5. Mount Lawley Teachers College
6. Mr L. Murray
7. Staff of the Teachers Centre for Continuing Education
8. Western Australian Secondary Teachers College
9. Western Australian Teacher Education Authority

Groups Interviewed:

Interviews were held with representatives of the following -

Education Department

Staff of the Teachers Centre for Continuing Education

State School Teachers Union of W.A. (Inc.)

APPENDIX 2

STATISTICAL INFORMATION RELATING TO THE TEACHERS CENTRE FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

TABLE 1.

Candidates enrolled for and unit enrolments in the Teachers' Higher Certificate Education Requirement, 1966 to 1977.

Year	Candidates Enrolled	Unit Enrolments		
		External	Part-time	TOTAL
1966	184	149	249	398
1967	350	294	388	682
1968	487	451	549	1000
1969	734	561	575	1136
1970	645	594	545	1139
1971	766	655	624	1279
1972	1144	903	854	1757
1973	1419	1098	1059	2157
1974	1571	1206	1071	2277
1975	1290	1085	974	2059
1976	1192	995	749	1744
1977	803	788	447	1235

Source: Teachers Centre for Continuing Education

TABLE 2.

Unit enrolments, 1977

	New Enrol-ments	Re-enrol-ments	Total Enrol-ments	Total No. Subjects Studied	Estimated No. to Complete all TCCE units 1977
T.H.C.	344	469	803	1235	251
T.C.	31	52	83	232	46

Source: Teachers Centre for Continuing Education

TABLE 3.

Theses enrolments, 1977

	Pre-prospectus stage	Post-prospectus stage	Total
T.H.C.	46	52	98

Source: Teachers Centre for Continuing Education